

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks.

Claims 1-16, 18-27 and 29-31 were pending in this Application. In the Office Action:

- Claims 1-8, 10, 12, 13, 23, 24, 27, and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0006762 to Kwan et al. ("Kwan") in view of either the Japanese patent document JP 2002-22868 (cited in Applicant's IDS filed August 16, 2005) or the Japanese patent document 5-335199 (cited in Applicant's IDS filed August 16, 2005).
- Claims 9, 11, 14-16, 25, 26, and 30 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.
- Claims 18-22 and 31 were allowed.

In this Amendment, claims 1, 11, 14, 25-27 and 31 have been amended. Claims 3-5, 7, 9-10, 24, and 30 have been cancelled without disclaimer or prejudice to any subsequently filed application claiming the cancelled subject matter. Accordingly, upon entry of this Amendment, claims 1-2, 6, 8, 11-16, 18-23, 25-27, 29, and 31 will be pending.

Claims Deemed Allowable

The Examiner is thanked for indicating allowable subject matter. In addition to the allowed claims 18-22 and 31, in this Amendment, claims 1, 11, 14, and 25-27 have been amended and are each presented in independent form to recite subject matter deemed allowable by the Examiner.

Claims 11 and 14-16

In accordance with the Examiner's suggestion, dependent claims 11 and 14 have each been rewritten in independent form to recite all the limitations of the base claim, namely claim 10. Accordingly, claims 11 and 14 should be in condition for allowance upon entry of this amendment. Claims 15 and 16 were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. However, claims 15 and 16 should be allowable in their present form without amendment due to their dependence from allowable claim 14.

Claims 25-26

Also in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion, claims 25-26 have each been rewritten in independent form to recite the subject matter of base claim 24. Accordingly, claims 25-26 should be in condition for allowance upon entry of this Amendment.

Claims 1 and 27

Independent claim 1 has been amended to recite all the limitations of dependent claim 9, which was deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Similarly, independent claim 27 has been rewritten to include all the limitations of claim 30, which was deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Thus, claims 1 and 27, as amended herein, should be in condition for allowance.

Claims Rejected Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Amended Claims

- Claims 1 and 27. As noted above, rejected claims 1 and 27 have been amended to recite all the limitations of respective claims 9 and 30, which were deemed allowable if written in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, because amended claims 1 and 27 recite allowable subject matter, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1 and 27 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) be withdrawn.
- Claims 2, 6, 8, and 23. The rejection of claims 2, 6, 8, and 23 was predicated upon the rejection of base claim 1. Because claim 1, as amended, recites allowable subject matter, it would be improper to maintain a rejection of dependent claims 2, 6, 8, and 23 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 2, 6, 8, and 23 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) be withdrawn.
- Claim 29. Similarly, the rejection of claim 29 was predicated upon the rejection of base claim 27, which, as amended herein, recites allowable subject matter. Thus, it would be improper to maintain a rejection of dependent claim 29 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 29 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) be withdrawn.

Cancelled Claims

In order to expedite prosecution of this Application, claims 3-5, 7, 9-10, 24, and 30 have been cancelled in this Amendment, without disclaimer or prejudice to the filing of a continuing application or other application directed to the subject matter of the cancelled claims.

Claims 12 and 13

In the Office Action, claims 12-13, which depend from allowable claim 11, were listed as rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a). Applicants believe that, inasmuch as claim 11 was deemed allowable, the listing of claims 12 and 13 as rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) was inadvertent. In any event, at least for their dependence on an allowable claim, claims 12-13 should be in condition for allowance upon entry of this Amendment.

Clarification of Claims for Purposes of Achieving Consistency

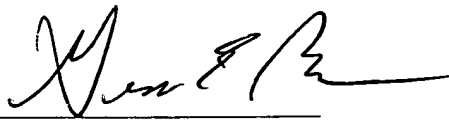
Several occurrences of the expressions “supporting element” and “supporting portion” were found in the claims, in places where “supporting member” clearly was intended. Those occurrences are being replaced with “supporting member” for purposes of achieving consistency in the claims. Because one of ordinary skilled in the art would readily have appreciated from the original claim language what was intended, it is respectfully submitted that no new matter is being added by these amendments. Nor is any disclaimer or estoppel intended as a result of these changes. None of the clarifying changes are being made for purposes of patentability.

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In view of the foregoing, all of the claims in this case are believed to be in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions or determine that any further action is desirable to place this application in even better condition for issue, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone applicants' undersigned representative at the number listed below.

Date: July 28, 2006

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